

Front Page	End Page	Other Page
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In the Name of Security

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✓ Sen. Sam J. Ervin has proposed, and already guided through the Senate Judiciary Committee, an excellent bill to protect the privacy and civil rights of federal employees. In the main, it would prevent agency officials from delving into the unquestionably private aspects of an employee's life. And it would give government workers protection against being pressured to support supposedly worthy causes unrelated to their jobs, sometimes outside of government offices.

Senator Ervin has worked long and carefully to shape this bill. It deserves — almost certainly it will gain — passage in both the House and the Senate. Perhaps it should apply equally to protect workers within the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. But doubts about that, particularly from CIA officials, have resulted in postponement of Senate action and the provoking of Senator Ervin's anger. Some exceptions are written into the bill to meet CIA objections, he insists, and the measure ought not to be delayed further.

This is not just a collision between basic rights of individual workers and the prac-

ticed abuses of an overbearing employer. The CIA does indeed operate above the law, as most of us understand that phrase. It is answerable only to a small, select committee of the Congress; its appropriations are not identifiable in the budget; its expenditures are not audited for public accountability; its activities, which include discreet violation of American codes of law as well as those of enemy, neutral and allied nations, are shrouded in super secrecy. Such a spy agency is deemed essential to the security of this country and the furtherance of its foreign policy. Changing its posture or limiting the scope of its activities is not at issue in Senator Ervin's bill.

The question which his measure raises is whether CIA employees should not be entitled to legal protection of their privacy the same as all other government workers. That could be amended to ask whether the CIA should even seem to be just another government agency. It ought not to abuse the rights of its employees. It is given, and no doubt it uses, the authority to do much more in the name of security.